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ABSTRACT

Liberal arts education and occupational education can and must complement each other. Different and separately administered general and vocational offerings will only delay the development of the total education enterprise necessary in a rapidly changing society. It is important to contemplate the skills and knowledge that schools/colleges/universities should be striving to impart. More viable relationships are needed between education and all of the work that people do; students should not have to choose between liberal arts education and occupational education. Post-industrial America now engages more people in sales, services, and government than in the production of goods. A knowledge-based society warrants more educational program-fusing. Career education activities are needed to help all students understand the free enterprise system and the arts and to develop consumer/economic literacy. More open-ended and flexible programs geared to individual needs must be designed for the next century. The broad range of an individual's talents should be developed; over-concentration on one specific area of education should be avoided. Likewise, high quality educational programs utilizing all of the educating mechanisms (Federal/State/ local governments, private employers, trade associations, labor unions, and the home) are needed. (EA)

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THE IMPORTANCE OF VOCATIONAL EDUCATION IN THE TOTAL EDUCATION PICTURE*

T. H. BELL

U.S. COMMISSIONER OF EDUCATION

IT IS A TREMENDOUS THRILL, BUT A HUMBLING EXPERIENCE, TO APPEAR BEFORE THIS VAST AUDIENCE OF YOUNG MEN AND WOMEN CHOSEN BY THEIR FFA HOME CHAPTER BECAUSE OF THEIR OUTSTANDING ACCOMPLISHMENTS TO REPRESENT THEIR SCHOOL, THEIR FRIENDS, AND THEIR FAMILY AT THESE MEETINGS. I CONGRATULATE EACH OF YOU FOR THE ACCOMPLISHMENTS THAT LED YOUR CHAPTER TO SEND YOU HERE.

WHEN I THINK ABOUT HOW NEARLY A HALF-MILLION SERIOUS AND DEDICATED YOUTHS LIKE YOU ARE EXEMPLIFYING THROUGH ACTIVITIES RATHER THAN MERE WORDS THE VERY ESSENCE OF WHAT DEMOCRACY AND CITIZENSHIP ARE ALL ABOUT, I CANNOT HELP WONDERING WHOM THE PROPHETS OF DOOM ARE REFERRING TO WHEN THEY PAINT SUCH A GLOOMY PICTURE OF TODAY'S YOUNGER GENERATION. AS A FORMER FUTURE FARMER MYSELF, I REGRET THAT I HAVE BEEN UNABLE TO SPEND MORE TIME WITH YOU AND SHARE WITH YOU MORE EXTENSIVELY YOUR EXCITING CONVENTION PROGRAM.

THIS IS <u>YOUR</u> CONVENTION, BUT BEFORE I CONTINUE I WANT TO RECOGNIZE, ON BEHALF OF THE EDUCATION COMMUNITY, THE UNSELFISH EFFORTS OF THE SEVERAL HUNDRED LEADERS FROM BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY GROUPS AND OTHER ORGANIZATIONS THAT SUPPORT NOT ONLY THE NATIONAL FFA FOUNDATION BUT A HOST OF OTHER YOUTH GROUPS, VOCATIONAL-TECHNICAL PROGRAMS, CAREER EDUCATION, AND MANY OTHER EDUCATION ACTIVITIES BOTH LOCALLY AND NATIONALLY. THE OFFICE OF EDUCATION AND OUR COLLEAGUES ACROSS THE COUNTRY ARE ETERNALLY

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*PREPARED FOR 48TH NATIONAL CONVENTION OF THE FUTURE FARMERS OF AMERICA; KANSAS CITY, MISSOURI, NOVEMBER 13, 1975, 9:15 P.M. CST (10:15 P.M. EST).

GRATEFUL TO YOU FOR YOUR LEADERSHIP AND ASSISTANCE AND FOR YOUR JOINING WITH US IN A PARTNERSHIP ALL ACROSS THE COUNTRY AIMED AT IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF LIFE FOR BOTH YOUTH AND ADULTS.

THE TOPIC SUGGESTED TO ME FOR THIS EVENING -- THE IMPORTANCE OF VOCATIONAL EDUCATION IN THE TOTAL EDUCATION PICTURE-- BOTHERS ME SOMEWHAT. IT SORT OF SUGGESTS THAT WE HAVE VARIOUS "KINDS" OF EDUCATION. TO FACE FACTS, OF COURSE, THAT HAS BEEN PRETTY MUCH THE PICTURE OVER THE YEARS. I SUBMIT, HOWEVER, THAT WHILE MUCH OF THE PIONEERING IN SUCH INNOVATIONS AS OPEN-ENDED CURRICULUMS AND PROGRAM AMALGAMATION HAS BEEN DONE BY VOCATIONAL-TECHNICAL EDUCATION PEOPLE, COMPARTMENTALIZATION OF EDUCATION MAY NOT MEET OUR NEEDS IN THE FUTURE.

ALL TOO OFTEN THE REAL ISSUES IN EDUCATION ARE ALMOST HOPELESSLY ENTANGLED IN QUESTIONS OF RELATIVE STATUS -- VOCATIONAL-TECHNICAL SCHOOLS SEEKING ACADEMIC RECOGNITION OR SOME COMPARABLE INSIGNE OF RESPECTABILITY, TEACHERS OF STANDARD ACADEMIC SUBJECTS FIGHTING FOR PROMINENCE. ADVOCATES OF AN EDUCABLE ELITE RESENT MASS EDUCATION. THOSE COMMITTED TO THE RESEARCH IDEAL OPPOSE EXPENDITURE OF TIME AND MONEY ON OTHER DISCIPLINES. AND, OVER ALL, EVERY TYPE OF INSTITUTION IS COMPETING FOR STUDENTS AND POPULAR SUPPORT.

GENERAL EDUCATION, WHEN VIEWED FUNCTIONALLY, IS NOT THE OPPOSITE OF VOCATIONAL-TECHNICAL EDUCATION. THE TWO ARE COMPLEMENTARY. MORE OFTEN THAN NOT, THEY ARE ALIKE IN KIND, DIFFERING ONLY IN PURPOSE.

EDUCATION FUNCTIONS VOCATIONALLY WHEN ITS PURPOSE IS TO CULTIVATE SKILL IN THE ACTUAL PERFORMANCE OF A PREVIOUSLY DETERMINED TASK. ARGUMENT TO THE EFFECT THAT GENERAL AND VOCATIONAL OFFERINGS MUST BE TOTALLY DIFFERENT AND SEPARATELY ADMINISTERED WILL ONLY SERVE TO DELAY THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE TOTAL EDUCATION ENTERPRISE NEEDED NOW IN A RAPIDLY CHANGING SOCIETY.

CONFLICT BETWEEN THESE TWO FUNCTIONS IS JOINED WHEN CONCERN FOR THE ONE LEADS ADMINISTRATORS, TEACHERS, AND STUDENTS TO FORGET THE IMPORTANCE OF THE OTHER.

WHAT REALLY CONCERNS US, THEN, IS EDUCATION AS A WHOLE, RECOGNIZING THAT IT HAS SEVERAL FORMS, FUNCTIONS, AND PURPOSES. EDUCATION, LIKE ELECTRICITY, IS MUCH EASIER TO DEFINE IN TERMS OF ITS EFFECTS THAN IN TERMS OF WHAT IT IS.

AS WE CELEBRATE OUR 200TH YEAR AS A NATION AND CONTEMPLATE THE BEGINNING OF OUR THIRD CENTURY, WHAT SKILLS, KNOWLEDGE, AND WISDOM SHOULD OUR SCHOOLS, COLLEGES, AND UNIVERSITIES BE STRIVING TO IMPART TO OUR CITIZENS? THIS IS A DIFFICULT QUESTION, BUT WE MUST ALL BE THINKING ABOUT IT FOR, IF EDUCATION IS NOT FUNCTIONAL AND RESULTS-ORIENTED, IT DOES NOT JUSTIFY EITHER CONFIDENCE OR SUPPORT.

ONE OF THE FUNCTIONAL ASPECTS OF EDUCATION SHOULD BE TO PREPARE EACH INDIVIDUAL FOR USEFUL, MEANINGFUL, PRODUCTIVE, ENJOYABLE, AND TOTALLY SELF-FULFILLING WORK.

MANY EDUCATORS WOULD QUARREL WITH LISTING PREPARATION FOR WORK AS A FUNCTION OF THE TOTAL EDUCATION SYSTEM, AND WOULD DOWNGRADE IT TO A NARROWLY CONCEIVED "KIND" OF EDUCATION REPRESENTED IN THEIR MIND AS "VOCATIONAL" EDUCATION. WOODROW WILSON ONCE SAID "WHEN EDUCATION BECOMES TECHNICAL OR VOCATIONALLY ORIENTED, IT LOSES THE BROAD AND GENIAL FACE OF LEARNING". FAR TOO MANY AMONG OUR FRIENDS AND ASSOCIATES TODAY SHARE THIS PHILOSOPHY.

THE ADJECTIVES I ATTACHED TO WORK A MOMENT AGO -- USEFUL, MEANINGFUL, AND SO ON -- TAKE US BEYOND SIMPLY MASTERING A VOCATIONAL SKILL. THEY ALSO INCLUDE SOME OF THE TRAITS COMMONLY FOUND IN GENERAL AND LIBERAL EDUCATION. IT IS OFTEN SAID THAT EDUCATION IS PREPARATION FOR LIFE. BUT LIFE WITHOUT MEANINGFUL WORK IS NEITHER REWARDING NOR FULFILLING.

A FEW MONTHS AGO I SAID IN A SPEECH AT A CONFERENCE OF LIBERAL ARTS COLLEGE PRESIDENTS THAT "WE NEED TO LIBERALIZE VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TO VOCATIONALIZE LIBERAL EDUCATION."

THAT SPEECH DREW SOME CRITICISM BECAUSE CERTAIN PUBLISHED ACCOUNTS OF IT OMITTED SOMETHING ELSE I SAID. THAT WAS THAT "A BASIC KNOWLEDGE OF THE LIBERAL ARTS IS STILL VERY IMPORTANT-- IN FACT, IT IS STILL FOREMOST IN PRIORITY-- BUT I BELIEVE IT CAN BE SUCCESSFULLY COMBINED WITH PROGRAMS EMPHASIZING SPECIALIZED SKILLS."

I DID NOT PROPOSE TO MAKE LIBERAL ARTS SCHOOLS OUT OF OUR MANY EXCELLENT VOCATIONAL AND TECHNICAL SCHOOLS— NOR WAS I SUGGESTING THAT WE MAKE VOCATIONAL SCHOOLS OUT OF OUR LIBERAL ARTS COLLEGES.

NONTHELESS, ALTHOUGH WORK GIVES US FREEDOM AND INDEPENDENCE, WE ALSO NEED TO BE EDUCATED IN THE LIBERAL ARTS AND HUMANITIES. SUCH EDUCATION FREES US FROM THE RESTRAINTS OF MATERIALISM AND GIVES US FREEDOM OF THE HUMAN SPIRIT.

PREPARING THE NATION'S CITIZENS FOR SELF-FULFILLING WORK IS A MOST VITAL FUNCTION OF EDUCATION. WE MUST STOP THINKING OF SOME ASPECTS OF EDUCATION AS BEING SO LOFTY AS TO BE ABOVE AND BEYOND WORK. OF COURSE WORK IS NOT ALL THERE IS TO LIFE. BUT IT IS A BIG PART OF IT. WE NEED MUCH MORE VIABLE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN EDUCATION AND ALL OF THE WORK THAT PEOPLE DO IN AMERICA. WE SHOULDN'T HAVE TO CHOOSE BETWEEN LIBERAL EDUCATION AND OCCUPATIONAL OR PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION. THEY CAN AND MUST COMPLEMENT EACH OTHER.

VOCATIONAL AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION PEOPLE IN YEARS PAST HAVE BEEN THE PRINCIPAL CHAMPIONS OF MAKING EDUCATION FUNCTIONAL IN TERMS OF WHAT THE INDIVIDUAL DOES, OR WILL HAVE TO DO, TO HAVE A USEFUL AND PRODUCTIVE LIFE.. OTHER MEMBERS OF THE EDUCATION COMMUNITY IN THE PAST HAVE LEARNED VALUABLE LESSONS FROM THESE TYPES OF ACTIVITIES.

WHAT ABOUT TOMORROW?

AS WE LOOK TO THE FUTURE, I WANT TO SHARE WITH YOU A FEW OBSERVATIONS ABOUT OUR CHANGING SOCIETY AND TO TELL YOU WHAT I THINK SOME OF THEM IMPLY FOR EDUCATION.

THE UNITED STATES IS THE FIRST POST-INDUSTRIAL SOCIETY IN HISTORY. WELL OVER 60 PERCENT OF OUR LABOR FORCE IS ENGAGED IN SOMETHING OTHER THAN INDUSTRY IN THE TRADITIONAL PRODUCTION-ORIENTED SENSE. MORE PEOPLE ARE NOW ENGAGED IN SALES, IN SERVICE, IN GOVERNMENT, THAN IN THE PRODUCTION OF GOODS. IN FACT, THREE OUT OF EVERY FIVE JOBS CREATED IN THE PAST TEN YEARS ARE IN SUCH ACTIVITIES. GENERAL AND SPECIAL UNITS OF GOVERNMENT ALONE EMPLOY ABOUT ONE OUT OF EVERY SIX WAGE EARNERS. SALES AND SERVICE, REAL ESTATE AND MONEY MANAGEMENT, AND THE USE, STORAGE, AND RETRIEVAL OF DATA ACCOUNT FOR OTHER LARGE PROPORTIONS.

VOCATIONAL AGRICULTURAL AND BUSINESS EDUCATION LEADERS HAVE RECOGNIZED THIS TREND AND HAVE DEVELOPED INNOVATIVE PROGRAMS IN AGRI-BUSINESS. OTHERS SHOULD FOLLOW THEIR LEAD.

INCREASINGLY MORE OF THIS TYPE OF PROGRAM-FUSING, OR COOPERATION, WILL BECOME NECESSARY BECAUSE ONE PRINCIPAL CHARACTERISTIC OF A POST-INDUSTRIAL SOCIETY IS THAT IT IS ORGANIZED AROUND INFORMATION AND THE MANAGEMENT AND USE OF THAT INFORMATION IN VERY COMPLEX SYSTEMS. OURS IS A KNOWLEDGE-BASED SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC SOCIETY.

NOT ONLY IS KNOWLEDGE <u>CAPITAL</u>, AS THE NOTED EDUCATOR IVAN ILLICH DESCRIBES IT; KNOWLEDGE NOW MORE THAN EVER IS <u>POWER</u>.

THE KNOWLEDGE EXPLOSION HAS VASTLY AFFECTED THE NATURE OF WORK. THE SOCIOLOGIST JULES HENRY SUGGESTS THAT THE OVER-SPECIALIZATION OF OUR WORK ESTABLISHMENTS IS MAKING MANY PEOPLE SPIRITUALLY USELESS TO THEMSELVES, BECAUSE THEY MUST TAILOR THEMSELVES EVEN MORE CLOSELY TO THE DEMANDS OF THEIR WORK.

MOREOVER, THE KNOWLEDGE EXPLOSION AND THE SPEED WITH WHICH INFORMATION NOW BECOMES OBSOLETE HAS REDUCED THE VALUE OF EXPERIENCE TO THE POINT THAT, IN CERTAIN FIELDS, THE MORE RECENTLY TRAINED THE INDIVIDUAL IS, THE MORE DESIRABLE HE IS FOR EMPLOYMENT. THIS IS A PROBLEM OF GROWING PROPORTIONS FOR WHICH EDUCATION, WHETHER IN THE FORMAL SCHOOL STRUCTURE OR IN INDUSTRY, HAS NOT YET DEVELOPED SATISFACTORY SOLUTIONS.

IT SUGGESTS TO ME THAT THE ADJECTIVES I EARLIER APPLIED TO WORK MUST INCREASINGLY BE TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT AS WE PLAN FOR THE FUTURE. IT ALSO SUGGESTS THAT WE NEED TO RE-EXAMINE THE POPULAR BUT ERRONEOUS ASSUMPTION THAT MANY YOUTHS TODAY REJECT WORK.

THE KNOWLEDGE BASE OF OUR SOCIETY, AND ITS DYNAMIC CHARACTER, ALSO SUPPORT THE CONTENTION I HAVE STATED ON MANY OCCASIONS THAT WE NEED THE TYPE OF CAREER EDUCATION ACTIVITIES THAT WILL HELP ALL STUDENTS TO KNOW AND UNDERSTAND THE BASIC ELEMENTS OF THE FREE ENTERPRISE SYSTEM AS WELL AS THE ARTS AND OTHER EDIFYING THINGS, AND TO DEVELOP CONSUMER AND ECONOMIC LITERACY.

NO ONE WHO HAS READ ABOUT THE RECENTLY DISCLOSED FINDINGS OF THE OFFICE OF EDUCATION'S ADULT PERFORMANCE LEVEL STUDY -- OR HEARD ABOUT THEM ON RADIO OR TELEVISION -- CAN DOUBT THAT WE NEED MORE CONSUMER AND ECONOMIC EDUCATION.

THE STUDY FOUND THAT SURPRISING NUMBERS OF AMERICANS ARE EITHER UNABLE, OR BARELY ABLE, TO COPE WITH SUCH EVERYDAY THINGS AS COUNTING THEIR CHANGE, READING A HELP-WANTED AD, OR GETTING A DRIVER'S LICENSE. FOURTEEN PERCENT OF THEM DON'T KNOW HOW TO FILL OUT A BANK CHECK, AND 14 MILLION OF THEM CAN'T ADDRESS AN ENVELOPE PROPERLY.

WITH THE INTENT TO MAKE OURSELVES READY NOW FOR THE NEXT CENTURY, PROGRAMS MUST BE DESIGNED WHICH ARE OPEN-ENDED AND FLEXIBLE. A STUDENT SHOULD BE ABLE TO LEAVE SCHOOL FROM TIME TO TIME TO WORK FOR A WHILE... GET COOPERATIVE WORK EXPERIENCE OUTSIDE THE SCHOOL... TAKE ADVANCED WORK WITHOUT REGARD FOR THE SCHOOL CALENDAR OR THE COLLEGE CATALOGUE... WHATEVER WORKS BEST FOR HIM. SUCH A SYSTEM CAN BECOME REALITY ONLY THROUGH THE COORDINATED EFFORTS OF PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SCHOOLS, COMMUNITY COLLEGES, VOCATIONAL AND TECHNICAL SCHOOLS, AND UNIVERSITIES, AND ONLY WITH THE BACKING OF SUCH LEADERS OF LABOR AND MANAGEMENT AS ARE REPRESENTED HERE TONIGHT.

WE MUST RECOGNIZE THAT THE HOME, THE BUSINESS PLACE, THE WORK STATION AWAY FROM HOME, THE NEIGHBORHOOD, AND THE SOCIAL GROUP ARE ALL TO SOME EXTENT CONTRIBUTORS TO EDUCATION. WE MUST RECOGNIZE A

TOO THAT EDUCATION DEPENDS ON WHAT THE STUDENT DOES, NOT ON THE NAME OF A COURSE OR THE LABEL ON A CLASSROOM DOOR.

I SUGGEST THAT WE AVOID OVER-CONCENTRATION ON ONE SPECIFIC AREA OF EDUCATION. RATHER, WE SHOULD DEVELOP A BROAD RANGE OF TALENTS. WE DARE NOT ENCOURAGE ANY YOUNG PERSON TO TERMINATE HIS EDUCATION UNTIL HE HAS DEVELOPED TO THE MAXIMUM HIS ABILITY TO LIVE A LIFE AND MAKE A LIVING.

I AM REMINDED THAT QUEEN VICTORIA ONCE SAID THAT MEN LIKE LORD JOHN RUSSELL WOULD BE MORE USEFUL AS WELL AS BETTER MEN IF THEY KNEW A THIRD SUBJECT TO TALK ABOUT. RUSSELL WAS INTERESTED IN NOTHING BUT THE CONSTITUTION OF 1688 AND HIMSELF.

WE NEED YOUNG MEN AND WOMEN WITH THE EDUCATION OF A THOMAS JEFFERSON. A CONTEMPORARY DESCRIBED JEFFERSON AS "A GENTLEMAN OF 32, WHO COULD CALCULATE AN ECLIPSE, SURVEY AN ESTATE, TIE AN ARTERY, PLAN AN EDIFICE, TRY A CASE, BREAK A HORSE, DANCE A MINUET, AND PLAY THE VIOLIN."

OUR SCHOOLS ALSO NEED TO DEVELOP YOUNG MEN AND WOMEN WHO WILL PARTICIPATE IN THE PERFECTION AND PERPETUATION OF THE SCHOOLS AND STAND FOR THE BEST POSSIBLE SOLUTION TO THE SCHOOLS' PROBLEMS, REGARDLESS OF THEIR PERSONAL AMBITION OR WELFARE. BUT LET US NOT SUGGEST THAT THEY CARRY SUCH IDEALISM TO THE POINT OF FANTASY--TO THE POINT THAT THEY REGARD ANY COMPROMISE OR CONCESSION AS IMMORAL. HENRY CLAY, WHO SHOULD HAVE KNOWN, SAID THAT "COMPROMISE WAS THE CEMENT THAT HELD THE UNION TOGETHER."

IN SUMMARY, WE ARE GOING TO HAVE TO MAKE CERTAIN THAT WE MAKE AVAILABLE INCREASINGLY MORE EDUCATION PROGRAMS OF HIGH QUALITY, UTILIZING ALL OF THE EDUCATING MECHANISMS IN OUR COMMUNITIES.

I CAUTION THAT THE WORD "QUALITY" SHOULD NOT BE CONFUSED WITH SOPHISTICATION OF COURSE CONTENT. BY "HIGH QUALITY PROGRAMS" I MEAN THOSE WITH ADEQUATE RESOURCES, WELL TRAINED TEACHERS, SUITABLE BUILDINGS, AND APPROPRIATE CURRICULUMS AND METHODS. THESE ARE ONLY POSSIBLE THROUGH PARTNERSHIP AMONG FEDERAL, STATE, AND LOCAL GOVERNMENTS, PRIVATE EMPLOYERS AND TRADE ASSOCIATIONS, LABOR UNIONS, THE HOME, AND THE REST OF THE COMMUNITY.

IN THE SHORT RUN, THE OBVIOUS BENEFICIARY OF SUCH PLANNING AND COOPERATION WILL BE THE STUDENT. IN THE LONG RUN, IT WILL BE SOCIETY AS A WHOLE.

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